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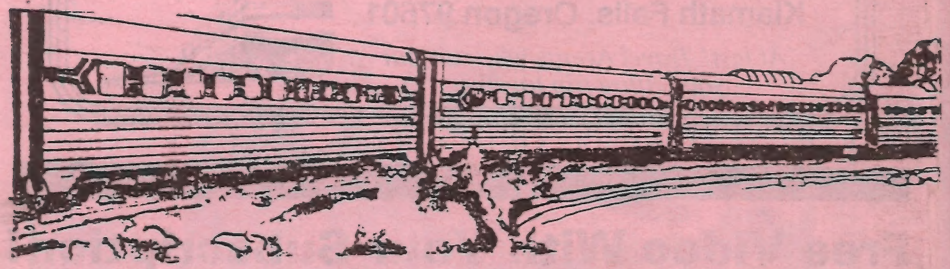

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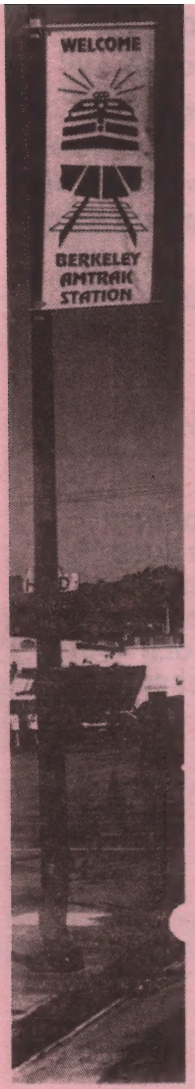

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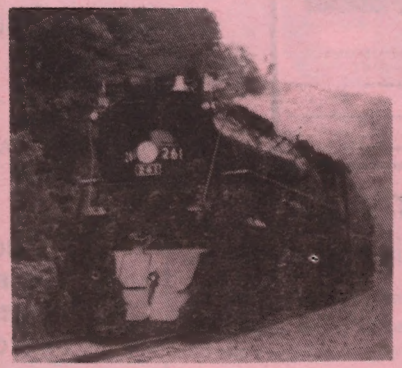

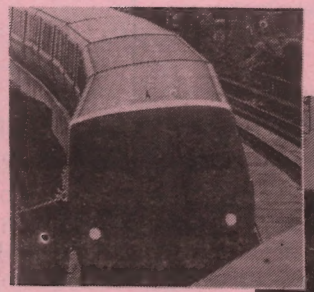

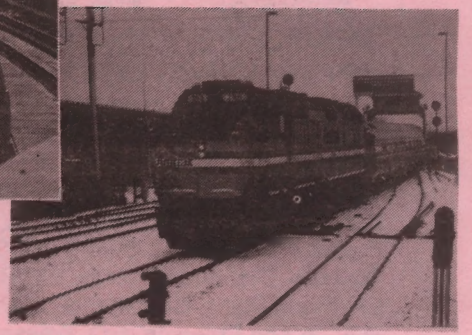

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ISSUE NO. 563
FEBRUARY 28, 1997

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

-The *Silver Palm*
-Boston *Lake Shore Ltd*

ON THE COVER

Due to extreme cold Midwestern temperatures during January, some of Amtrak's trains were delayed by frozen switches, slow orders and equipment problems. The **Capitol Limited** ran several hours late eastbound on several of its runs in January on the coldest days. On January 18 the temperatures dipped to the single digits, and the **Capitol Limited** again ran late, and is seen here descending Sand Patch grade on CSX's former B&O main west of Cumberland MD, splitting the signall masts at Manilla PA, running almost four hours late. Photo and caption by Alex Mayes.

The Canadian Rail Passenger Yearbook explores the history and current events of passenger railroading. Loads of colour and b&w photos to delight the eye with in-depth articles for the curious. The 1996-1997 edition is now available for $21.95 plus $2.50 postage. Order from Trackside Canada, P. O. Box 1369, Station B, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5R4

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http://trainweb.com - A web site devoted to Amtrak travel. Dozens of travelogues and hundreds of color photos are featured along with information on routes, schedules, prices and accommodations.

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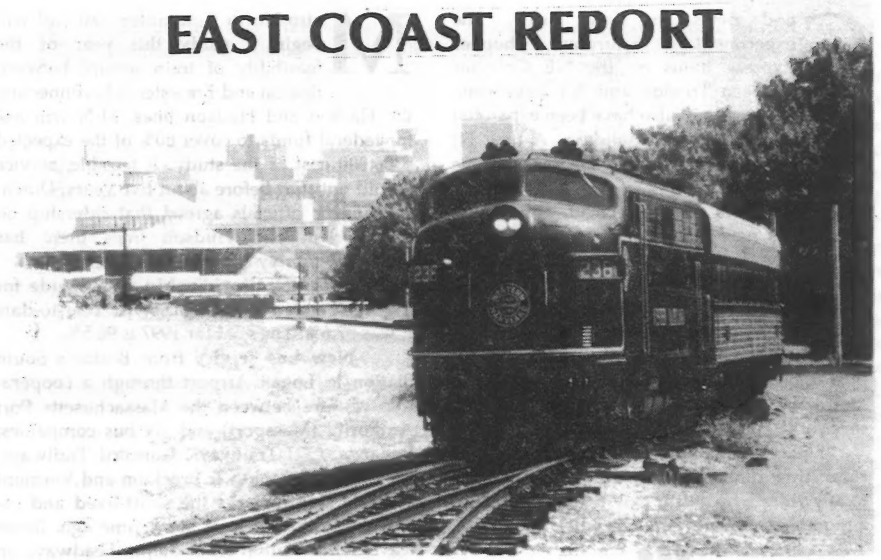
STAFF: James Russell, Editor. Editors-at-Large: Glenn Lee & Paul Rayton. Regional Correspondents: Peter Bretz, Jack Ferry, Adron Hall, Kenneth Maylath, Peter Roehm. RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads $1.50/line of 80 spaces. Display ads $1.50/square inch.

EAST COAST REPORT



The B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore MD is headquarters for the operation pictured above. Excursion trains will be starting operations again in March, having Jan and Feb off. The train seen here and on the rear cover is pulled by Western Maryland unit 236, an F7. Trains take museum visitors on a 30-minute trip over the historic first mile of railroad right of way in the US.

In the above photo, an excursion train is westbound on the Museum's line, with the Museum's roundhouse and the Baltimore skyline in the background, photographed last Sep 29. On the rear cover, the top photo, taken last Oct 6, shows an excursion train on historic trackage at the junction with the CSX's Mt. Clare branch. The lower photo, from Sep 29, is of an excursion train westbound at Carroll Park. Trains run weekends, and might also be powered by a GP9, SW900, SW-1 or GP7. The museum boasts one of the nation's most notable locomotive collections. Photos by Bill Hakkarinen.

●●●

Amtrak now provides through ticketing to Lake Placid NY and area hotels, directly from the Westport NY train station, on the route of Amtrak's **Adirondack**. For an extra $15 fee, Lake Placid Sightseeing will carry Amtrak passengers by bus from there to Lake Placid. That's an east-west routing, different from the railroad route from Utica described here last issue, for which restoration is proposed.

Amtrak's NE Corridor Communications Dept said in the Feb issue of its newletter "Working on the Railroad" that a Metroliner General Manager, Tom Pyle, has been appointed. His job is to focus on the Metroliner customer, Amtrak said: "Metroliner coach interiors are being modernized, with new ceiling and wall coverings in an updated silver and blue decor. More comfortable seats are being installed; halogen lights added; and the public address systems are being improved. Amtrak has already placed into service the first complete set of seven 'Concept 2000' refurbished Metroliner cars, and additional cars will be phased into service. On the outside, you'll notice a new, more contemporary logo and striping." Amtrak also said that menus now offer a greater variety of sandwiches, low-fat snacks and higher-quality coffee. Tom Pyle has been with Amtrak for 20 years, and in railroading for 28 years.

The New Jersey bill introduced in Dec that requires NJ Transit to construct a rail line from Monmouth Jct in South Brunswick Township to Lakewood was sponsored by State Senators Robert W. Singer (R-Ocean) and Joseph M. Kyrillos (R-Monmouth). It includes a package of transportation projects called the "Circle of Mobility".

Pushing for the initiatives in the bill, a Central Jersey Rail Coalition, an advisory body, has been formed, composed of rail advocates from Monmouth and Ocean Counties. The main effort of the group is to lobby for a NY-Atlantic City rail connection.

Good news in New Jersey. The experimental Saturday Shopper Express trains on the NE Corridor between Trenton and NY have been made permanent and also have been expanded to run on Sundays and holidays. A new NJ Transit NE Corridor timetable became effective on Jan 12.

Bad news in Connecticut. Gov. Rowland in his new budget message will reduce the gasoline tax by 5 cents per gallon. To help "pay" for this, bus fares will increase 15 cents this year and another 10 cents next year, and there may be increases in train fares. He has once again put Shore Line East on the chopping block, but also wants to eliminate all Metro-North Waterbury and Danbury branch service.

Shore Line East in an effort to increase ridership is offering a free April monthly ticket to any rider who gets a new rider to purchase a monthly ticket for March. —Bob Underwood.

●●●

Amtrak's NE Corridor features the fanciest and most numerous timetables and brochures in the Amtrak system. Besides the normal timetables, there is the "Working on the Railroad" newsletter, elaborately designed and printed in full color on heavy, slick paper. A special "Winter Weather Travel Guide" with publication date of Jan 15 gives NEC timetables along with special information on winter-weather travel. It's a normal timetable size (4x10), in blue ink. There's an "Atlantic Coast Service Timetable" (effective date Nov 10) covering the Florida trains, **Piedmont** and **Carolinian.** It's a larger timetable size, 4 ¼ x 11, in black ink on white paper. One of the nicest timetables Amtrak has ever produced is the Nov 10 Keystone Service Schedule & Travel Guide (4x9) in stapled booklet form with heavy, full-color cover and slick inside pages in blue ink. The cover features a photo of "A Keystone train providing service during the Blizzard of '96." Besides schedules, it includes much travel information, with station profiles and ads among its 20 pages. It refers readers also to the Web site: http://www.microserve.net/amtrakpa.

The "Working on the Railroad" newsletter won a bronze 1996 International Mercury Award, and Amtrak's NEC Communications won a similar Silver Award in the category of customer awareness campaigns.

Metro-North Commuter Railroad will begin a study this year of the feasibility of train service between Beacon and Brewster NY, connecting the Harlem and Hudson lines. M-N will ask for federal funds to cover 80% of the expected $300,000 cost of the study. If feasible, service would not start before about five years. Dutchess County officials agreed that ridership on the Harlem and Hudson lines there has increased notably over the past several years.

Metro-North ridership systemwide for the week ended Feb 9 was 98.1%. Year-to-date it was 97.6%. The goal for 1997 is 96.5%.

New bus service from Boston's South Station to Logan Airport through a cooperative venture between the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport) and six bus companies: Bonanza, C&J Trailways, Concord Trailways, Peter Pan, Plymouth & Brockton and Vermont Transit. This replaces the short-lived and infrequent van service of some time ago. Buses leave South Station on 15-30min headways on weekdays, and on weekends and holidays on 10-15min headways. From the airport, schedules are approximately the same. The rate is $6 each way, with children under 12 free. The schedule info number is 1-800-23LOGAN.

Washington Metrorail announced a service that began Jan 27, when customers could begin riding the Green Line into D.C. without transferring to the Red Line at Fort Totten. "Thanks to the new Green Line Commuter Shortcut, you pass right by Fort Totten station, automatically switching to the Red Line." Added Metrorail, "This is great news for Outer Green Line riders (Greenbelt, College Park-U of Md, Prince George's Plaza and West Hyattsville stations). Just think. No more wasted time switching lines, No more standing out in the weather at Fort Totten waiting for the Red Line train. It's a giant leap forward in Green Line commuting."

The shortcut operates during commute hours, running from Greenbelt station to Farragut North station. In non-commute hours, one must still transfer at Fort Totten. Trains running the shortcut route are identified with a large color-coded sign in the window, and the electronic display will identify the train as a Green or Red Line train. Outbound trains have three destinations: Red Line trains go to Silver Spring or Wheaton and Green Line trains go to Greenbelt. Inbound trains have three destinations also: Red Line trains go to Grosvenor or Shady Grove, while Green Line trains go to Farragut North. WMATA issued a timetable for the shortcut service.

Northbound Silver Meteor, train 98, derailed Feb 5 outside Jacksonville FL when it struck a tractor-trailer that was halted on the tracks. The driver was not in the vehicle. The Amtrak engine and baggage car derailed on fell on their sides, the first two cars, Amfleet coaches, derailed but remained upright. The rest of the train did not derail. The consist of train 98 was: engine 831 (P40); cars 1270 baggage, 25046, 25028, 25016 & 25058 coaches, 28019 lounge, 8558 diner, Viewliner sleepers 62023 & 62014, crew sleeper 2933. There were no serious injuries, but 15 people were taken to hospitals, treated and released. Passengers were transferred to **Auto Train** 52, and then to a special train if there destinations were further north.

The truck driver, Irving Breck, was trying a make a u-turn on the tracks. Aboard the train were 39 middle-schoolers en route from Jacksonville to Williamsburg VA, and they were very upset over the accident. A newspaper showed a photo of the engineer wearing a neck brace. He and his assistant were taken to a hospital with reported bruises, and authorities noted that they were very lucky. The train had just left Jacksonville and was in 79mph territory. Presumably, following Amtrak trains detoured west to Baldwin FL (**Sunset/Silver Palm** route), then north on the Baldwin Cutoff to Callahan FL, a busy CSX line that bypasses Jacksonville and was once used by the **Florida Special** and other trains.

Amtrak announced on Feb 10 that the Amtrak national operations center will be consolidated and moved to Delaware, affecting 230 Amtrak employees. Of them, 190 work in Philadelphia, 30 in Baltimore and 10 in Washington DC. Amtrak told them they can commute at no charge to the new location if they wish. Delaware put up about $11 million for the new site, and Amtrak will pay $700,000 annually in rent, and after 20 years will become the owner of the property. Amtrak President Downs said that Delaware was chosen for economic reasons. The center controls the allocation of staff and equipment.

The Sanford FL Amtrak station has become a fine train-watching location. In the space of six hours on Fridays only one can see six Amtrak trains, one or two CSX freights, and at least several Amtrak switching moves:

1:33pm—northbd **Silver Meteor.**
2:02—eastbd **Sunset Limited.**
2:56—southbd **Silver Meteor.**
4:30—northbd **Auto Train.**
5:42—northbd **Silver Star.**
7:30—westbd **Sunset Limited.**

It must be a Friday, as both **Sunset Limiteds** run that day. Gaps in the schedulle pass quickly, as there is much activity at the **Auto Train** terminal, located adjacent to the Amtrak depot. The inbound and outbound **Sunset** equipment is stored at the **Auto Train** yard. The eastbd train is turned on a rickety wye east of the station after the **Auto Train** leaves, and the westbd train must be assembled, as it is parked on two tracks in the yard. The **Sunset** serves the regular station, but must make a reverse move to or from **Auto Train.** There are also a number of connecting buses. The regular Sanford station is unstaffed except for a part-time baggageman who meets the **Sunset,** and the only food within walking distance is a small gift shop at the **Auto Train** terminal, that sells wrapped sandwiches and snacks, and is open only until the **Auto Train** leaves. The local Avis rental car office in Sanford offers free pickup and dropoff at Amtrak with advance notice. —Jack Turner.

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C firs niv ary, Feb 16, of the tragic co n of the **Capitol Limited** and a MARC commuter train at Silver Spring MD, a group of Harpers Ferry WV residents were installing a permanent memorial to eight Job Corps students there and three CSX employees who died in the wreck. The memorial will have 11 cherry trees planted around it in a keyhole shape, one tree for each victim.

In Silver Spring, meanwhile, a memorial service was held on the 16th St bridge, overlooking the site of the crash.

SEPTA trolley operator Gary Mason was written up in the news at Valentine's Day. On holidays he decorates his car appropriately with this day bringing red lights and decorations and romantic music. He has been doing this since 1993 with the approval of SEPTA streetcar officials. Car 9025 was used Feb 14. Mason reportedly can choose a car for a given holiday, and takes a newly-painted specimen.

The Washington Metro is sending its train operators, bus drivers and station managers to charm school, reported the Washington Post this month.

The safety steps that have been taken since the Feb 16, 1996 **Capitol Ltd-MARC** commuter train crash were outlined in the Feb 17 Washington Post. MARC, CSX, the FRA, the transit industry in general, Conrail and Norfolk Southern have all put an increased emphasis on safety, the paper reported.

RAIL CANADA

Rocky Mountaineer photo.

Transport 2000 Atlantic reports: Since the four Atlantic provinces signed an agreement to harmonize provincial sales taxes with the Federal Goods and Services Tax (GST), T-2000 Atlantic has done its homework and found that the plan benefits car drivers and hurts public transportation users.

It has been erroneously reported that public passenger transportation will not be taxed. This is true for urban transit where no GST is now levied. However, for intercity bus, rail or air tickets (i.e., any out-of-town travel), the tax will more than double from 7% to 15%.

For those financially and physically able to drive, taxes will be reduced from 18.8% to 15% on purchases and repairs. However, for those concerned about safety, the environment or those who cannot drive, the cost of travel will increase substantially. This is another example of how the BST gives an advantage to the affluent while hurting the less fortunate.

Another discriminatory factor is that a traveler from Halifax to Toronto will pay 15%, while an Ontarian coming to Nova Scotia pays only the GST of 7%.

Ontario's Conservative government intends to download responsibility for public transit to cash-strapped municipalities, whose beleaguered officials will have to weigh transit with welfare, garbage disposal, snow removal, etc., for precious property tax dollars. Municipal politicians may be tempted to consider public transit a luxury. In the face of the Jan 15 announcement, which stunned communities across the province, fare increases and reduced service are the looming monsters that transit consumers must fear in the years ahead. —Transport 2000.

●●●

Quebec Railway Corporation took possession of the CN Matapedia-Chandler line Dec 1. VIA and the QRC then reached a 6-mo agreement allowing VIA to continue the tri-weekly Chaleur service Montreal-Gaspe.

T-2000 Canada head David Glastonbury commended the parties to the agreement, but decried the disorderly process and the fact that any VIA route can suddenly lose the tracks it depends on. He pointed to the few miles of CN-owned track at Levis, Que., where developers are waiting impatiently to turn the public infrastructure into a site of luxury condominiums and ending access to downtown Quebec for VIA's Ocean train.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Ever since that lady sued McDonald's for millions because her coffee was—surprise—*hot!* companies seem more worried than ever about consumers coming after them.

"To head off these pesky plaintiffs, high-paid lawyers are plastering warnings all over the place.

"You can't say you weren't warned when your coffee cup is emblazoned: 'Caution! Contents may *SCALD!*' Sleeping pills suggest, 'Do not operate heavy machinery'....

"But perhaps the most overcautious of all is America's railroad, Amtrak. The safety card you'll find on board includes such helpful suggestions as: 'Never exit a moving train'.

"Aw gee, never? Not even when it looks so safe and fun?"

—Columnist Lenore Skenazy in NY Daily News Feb 5.

(Skenazy goes on to list eight more Amtrak safety tips, along with eight suggested ones, such as "Beware of fingers, thumbs and shirttails when lowering the toilet seat" and "Do not leave children on the tracks".)

News in this issue is updated through Feb 22, 1997.

Next issue: Jack Turner takes us traveling in Eastern Canada, plus other features.

RTN's E-mail address is:
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(Be sure not to omit the "1" after "rtnews".)
RTN is working on a Web site that should be available by next issue.

MIDWEST REPORT

AMERICA'S LAST ELECTRIC INTERURBAN

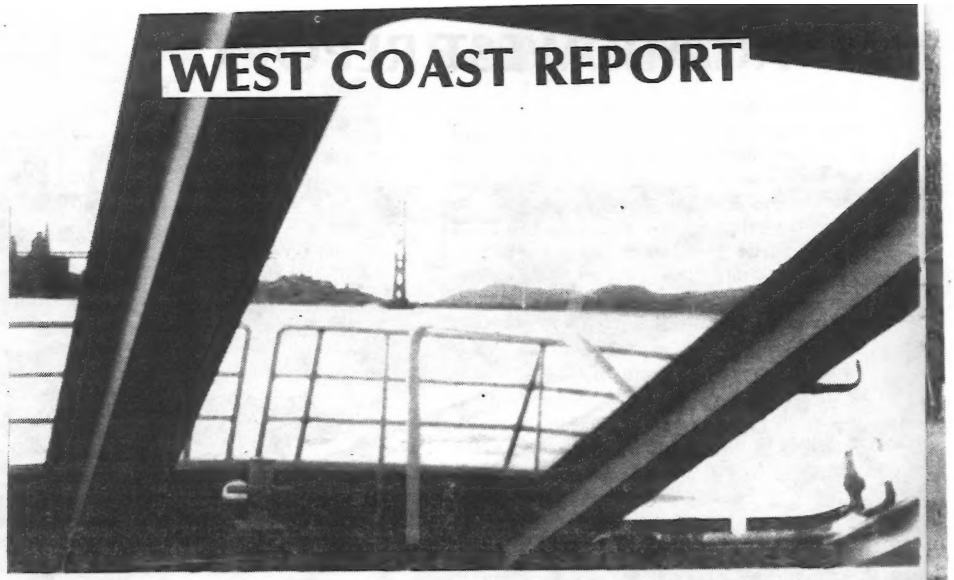
South Shore trains and Illinois Central (Metra) double-deck trains enter Chicago via this impressive electrified multi-track "iron highway." South Shore cars use the IC main line from Randolph St to Kensington Jct. The South Shore Line then turns east. Track from Kensington to the Illinois-Indiana state line is under a long-term lease. Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District owns all the trackage in Indiana, owns all the cars and operates all South Shore service. Double track extends through Hammond, East Chicago and Gary, where most of the service is. East of there, with the exception of Michigan City and South Bend, patronage is lighter and there are no major towns. Some flag stops have been eliminated. A through trip from Chicago to the South Bend intermodal facility at South Bend Airport takes 2 ¼ hours. Photographed by Don Scott Aug 28, 1994.

Denver's Regional Transportation District has negotiated a new 5-year operating agreement with the Denver Rail Heritage Society for the Platte Valley Trolley on the West Side/Associated Rail Line which is effective this Feb. The diesel-electric trolley each year carries over 40,000 people including tourists, Bronco football fans, other Mile High Stadium event-goers and McNichols Arena event attendees along the West Side right-of-way, which also assists in protecting the RTD's easements on the line.

As with the previous agreement, RTD will provide an annual contribution to the DRHS to be used to defray the cost of insurance and other operating expenses. The new agreement will be in effect until 2001, but provides for the right to terminate with 120 days' notice if it is determined by the RTD Board that all or any portion of the West Side Line and/or the Associated Rail Line is required for other RTD purposes, such as the West Corridor Light Rail project. Other RTD rail line purchases, along the Buchtel Corridor (SE Corridor—former C&S line) and on the Associated Railroad (W Corridor—former Denver & Interurban interurban line) have been encroached on to varying degrees. On the Buchtel alignment, residents have succeeded in seeing the property referred to as a "linear park" and in one case even installed landscaping and irrigation sprinklers on the former rail roadbed without permission. They have obtained hundreds of thousands of dollars in landscaping improvements from RTD and the City and County of Denver, while at the same time successfully blocking use of the line for rail transit. Attempts have been made to start this process in Lakewood on the West Corridor line as well, but its abandonment was more recent. Rapid transit development may occur in time to prevent its de facto takeover by adjacent property owners. —Bob Rynerson.

Region 10 of NARP will hold its annual meeting in Denver Apr 5. Ed Ellis of Amtrak Intercity is featured speaker, reporting on Amtrak's development of mail and express and its progress in general. Non-passenger revenue is particularly important in Region 10, which encompasses CO, IA, NE, SD, UT and WY.

WEST COAST REPORT



Shown above is the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge (western portion) seen from a Jack London Square-SF ferry (photo by RTN). The bridge was the biggest subject of transportation talk in the Bay Area in Feb, as the matter of making it earthquake-safe is discussed seriously. Caltrans has said the bridge—only the eastern, cantilever portion is in fairly critical need of upgrading—can be replaced for about the cost of retrofitting it, a process which would also result in mammoth traffic jams during the work. The public will have to decide on one of three options for the eastern span: retrofitting it, building a better-looking bridge, or building an elegant, more expensive bridge. Big battles are looming over funding for this. While a logical source is increased bridge tolls, motorists are notoriously reluctant to accept higher fees. A break in the eastern span at the Loma Prieta quake in Oct 1989 forced an extended closure and created new levels of BART patronage.

San Francisco Muni on Feb 11 got the okay to purchase 59 more Breda light rail vehicles and 124 articulated diesel buses. The potential cost of those is $190 million. The Muni said that the existing Boeing Vertol LRVs now 18 years old, are wearing out. Muni said that of the 135 Boeings, no more than 90 are operative at one time. Some new Breda cars are now running on the J-Church line, and are being criticized for a screeching noise they make when slowing on downhill stretches. The Muni said the noise problem is being studied. Previously, authorization was given for Muni to buy 250 new trolley-buses.

Correction: The Amtrak West Companion-Rides-Free promotion on California trains ends Mar 21, not 31 as reported last issue. Print ads also are being run, with graphics similar to previous promotions.

Tunneling on L.A. subways has uncovered thousands of valuable fossils, reports said this month. Some of the finds are as old as 15 million years.

The L.A. Metro has increased service on its 22-mile L.A.-Long Beach Blue light rail and 20-mile Green east-west Norwalk-El Segundo rail routes. Each has received one more train to reduce headways. The Green Line will operate every six minutes 6-6:30am weekdays and then every 7mins until 7:45am.

The Blue Line will see 27 trains into L.A. during the morning rush weekdays, up from 24, to help cope with a 13% ridership increase, to 45,500 per day, in one year. The Green Line is carrying 17,100 passengers on weekdays, up 60% in one year. Part of the increase may be due to connectivity with the extension of the Red Line subway two miles west to Wilshire Blvd & Western, attracting new riders across the rail system. The three new Red Line stations are all said to be quite busy—at Vermont, Normandie, and Western on Wilshire. The Red Line carried 22,000 passengers per day on weekdays before the extnesion opened. Metro planners expect 40,000 riders weekdays before the year is over. Normal Red Line running time from Union Station (Amtrak and Metrolink connections) to Wilshire & Western is 12mins. The extension may also be contributing to runups in Metrolink ridership.

Amtrak's Empire Builder runs were disrupted again Feb 2 when a BNSF freight on he west slope of Stevens Pass, six miles east of Skykomish, struck a landslide, derailing three locomotives and several cars. The media did not, apparently, report that flooding on the ex-NP BNSF route near Connell, 35 miles north of Pasco, closed that line segment—the **Builder's** access to Portland OR. BNSF reopened its ex-NP Stampede Pass route "just in time"—on Dec 7, 1996, only 19 days before rain-triggered land-slides repeatedly closed the "main" BNSF route to Seattle via Edmonds, beginning Dec 26. BNSF seems to be diverting grain trains to the Stampede routing, giving some breathing space to the Stevens and Columbia River routes.

The Seattle area's Regional Transit authority on Feb 13 made public a schedule for completing the $3.9 billion rail and bus commuter system the voters approved in Nov. For light rail the schedule is: complete the line from Tacoma Dome transit station to downtown Tacoma by the end of 2000; do the downtown Seattle to Boeing Access Road by the end of 2004; Boeing Access Road to South 200th St by end of 2005; and downtown Seattle to University District by late in 2006.

The first commuter rail service should be running by the end of 1999—from Seattle to Tacoma via Kent, Auburn, Puyallup and Sumner. From Seattle to Everett, via Edmonds and Mukilteo, it should be in place by early 2001.

For express bus service, Seattle to Tacoma and Lakewood should be operative by late 1998; Interstate 405 corridor, across Lake Washington on state route 520 and I-90, and I-5 between Seattle and Everett by 2000; and Pierce County express routes by end of 2000.

The schedule will be approved later, after three months of public comment. The RTA board did approve a budget for the first six months of 1997, at $8.5 million. As part of the first budget, hiring of staff will be done. The light rail, commuter rail and bus services will be handled by separate departments. Loans will be needed to cover the first half-year's budget, as sales and motor vehicles tax collections that voters approved won't be available until July.

Seattle to Vancouver BC rail passenger service resumed Feb 13. It was halted Jan 16 after a massive slide, and a total of 97 small slides on the BNSF line between Seattle and Everett, following extremely heavy rains and runoff from melting snow. The **Empire Builder** also resumed its Seattle-Spokane leg for the same reasons. Passengers for that train had been bused from Seattle to Spokane.

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Citizens of Auburn WA complained at a public hearing Feb 6 that since BNSF has reopened Stampede Pass—at the instigation of the Ports of Seattle and Tacoma—they are bearing the burden of increased rail traffic interfering with highway use, and they are receiving no direct benefits from the new line. Thus, they argued, those benefiting from the line should pay the costs of upgrading crossings. Those others would be the state and federal government, BNSF and the two ports mentioned.

Yosemite Valley reopening is targeted as Mar 15, Yosemite officials said on Feb 18. But they added that for Highway 140, the route from Merced used by Amtrak buses, entrance to the Valley will be only via shuttle buses from El Portal. It was not clear whether this meant that Amtrak buses would terminate at El Portal, with passengers shifted to the Yosemite shuttles. Most of the park has been closed since Jan 2 due to flooding, and Amtrak **San Joaquin** trains have been losing business destined for the popular attraction.

A worker on the Los Angeles Red Line subway was killed in a construction accident Feb 15. His was the first construction fatality in the four years the Red Line has been under construction, but was the seventh serious accident in the past two months. The fatal accident occurred on the north-south subway line that crosses Hollywood and the Santa Monica Mountains, into the San Fernando Valley. That portion of the Red Line is scheduled to open in 2002. An east-west portion of the line, from Union Station, is already in operation.

The L.A. Metro has ordered 74 new subway cars for Red Line extensions. The first two prototypes were delivered last fall. Total cost of the Red Line subway project is expected to be $4 billion. The Hollywood Hills tunnels will be 12,630 feet long and will pass through eight distinct geologic strata, ranging from 165 to 900 feet below the surface, on the line segment between Hollywood Blvd at Highland to Universal City, on the south edge of the San Fernando Valley. There has been some political talk of using light-rail type construction to extend the Red Line from its northern terminus 17.4 miles from Union Station near Vineland Avenue between Magnolia Avenue and Chandler Blvd.

Seattle's Pine Street reopened to trolleybuses on Feb 8, allowing for a more direct route into downtown from Capital Hill. This affects routes 7,12,14 & 43. The street had been closed to trolleys (and other vehicles) for several years. While the street opened, for better or worse, to regular traffic late in 1996, new trolley wire wasn't completed until now. The new configuration of Pine clearly favors the trolleys over other vehicles, allowing them to stop in-lane.

The 5.5-mile electrification of Metro route 70 between Downtown and the University District is proceeding nicely. Sources say it may be ready by September. —Bill Bryant.

The Orange County (CA) Transportation Authority (OCTA) reports as follows: "Orange County voters approved a balanced transportation vision when they passed Measure M in 1990. Measure M, the half-cent transportation sales tax which raises more than $3 billion for improvements over 20 years, includes $340 million for a rail transit system. At the same time, voter-approved Prop 116 set aside $125 million for a future rail system in Orange county. Both voter mandates left it to OCTA and Orange County residents to decide how and where that rail system should be developed...

"...OCTA has been conducting a Major Investment Study for the last two years to determine what transportation improvements will be needed to keep people moving.

"...Throughout this study, OCTA has worked with residents to narrow a range of potential options to seven different alternatives as part of the Corridor Major Investment Study. The federal Major Investment Study process requires studying all types of transportation improvements including bus, rail and freeway alternatives. This $3 million planning effort is the foundation for a plan to spend the $340 million in Measure M sales tax funds that was earmarked for a high technology advanced rail transit system.

"...OCTA is currently investigating the feasibility of rail alternatives along with enhanced bus service and freeway and arterial improvements."

OCTA is holding public hearings (open houses) in Anaheim Feb 20, Laguna Hills Feb 26, Irvine Mar 1, Santa Ana Mar 4 and Fullerton Mar 6 on the seven alternatives. In April OCTA will "combine your input with technical data and comments [from other organizations] into a single, long-term strategy for improving transportation in the Corridor." Then the public will be invited to comment, and in mid-1997 the Corridor Major Investment Study will conclude.

The seven alternatives are: 1-complete present projects only. 2-optimize use of present network (modest bus service expansion and street improvement). 3-create innovative bus system. 4-focus on adding road capacity for HOV/carpooler vehicles. 5-add light rail: route travels along Harbor Blvd in Fullerton and Anaheim, Main St in Santa Ana and thru central Irvine; create bus network to support rail. 6-add light rail: route travels next to Metrolink tracks in Fullerton and Anaheim, along Bristol St in Santa Ana and next to Metrolink tracks in Irvine; create bus network to support rail. 7-add road capacity for single occupant auto travel; maintain present mix of freeway, road, bus and rail choices.

BNSF's Stampede Pass line, which reopened Dec 7 after a decade of idleness, was closed to traffic after hi-railer cars operated by signal maintainers and maintenance forces collided in the Palmer Jct area north of Enumclaw WA, according to radio news-wire services Feb 14.

Meeting in Oceanside CA Feb 6, the North County Transit District (NCTD) voted 4-2 with one abstention to approve the environmental report on a proposed commuter rail route between Escondido and Oceanside. This opens to door to seeking federal funding. The project would cost $150 million and would involve 72 2-car trains daily for the 22-mile route. At the meeting, 15 speakers appeared, 14 of them opposing the line. Supporting it was NARP/TRAC member Richard C. Johnson of Oceanside. Said Johnson, "It was most unfortunate that so much opposition was mounted to such a valuable rail project. With Amtrak, Metrolink and the popular Coaster commuter system in full operation with 36 weekday arrivals and departures operating through Oceanside, it seems a shame that Vista, San Marcos and Escondido are isolated from progressive rail passenger service."

The project would use both existing and new rights-of-way. It would improve about 22 miles of existing railroad and the Escondido Transit Center, and add about 1.7 miles of new right of way to California State University at San Marcos. (A closely related, separate project is development of a bike path, with start date in late 2000.) The service would use diesel multiple-units such as the Siemens RegioSprinter. There would be 15 stations, with only two of them now existing: Oceanside Transit Center and Escondido Transit Center. Projected ridership for 2015 is 15,200 daily, and about 1100 people per year would use the bike path.

Endangered Trains II: The Boston *Lake Shore Limited*

By Walter E. Zullig, Jr.

(Mr. Zullig's account of the first part of his trip appeared last issue.)

Chicago, Oct 7, 1996: About 7:30pm, the conductor of train 48, the *Lake Shore Limited*, began checking passengers in at the desk, saying to me "You sound like someone who is from Boston," after seeing my ticket to that destination. Perhaps I do to a Midwesterner, but not to a Bostonian! Just as he took my ticket, the boarding announcement was made so I proceeded out to my Heritage sleeper, car 4810 "Pacific Skies", which was way up front directly behind the baggage car. The excellent attendant got me settled in but I soon roamed around to record the consist and watch the boarding process. The six Amfleet II coaches were being loaded by destination and seemed quite full out of Chicago. The two Viewliner sleepers and my Heritage car for Boston also were sold out.

The train was off to a smooth on-time departure at 8 PM. The attendant mentioned that shortly thereafter the diner steward would make a PA call "OK, 4810" indicating that the sleeper passengers should be sent back for dinner. About 8:30 he, I and several other passengers wondered what had happened to dinner. He called on the PA for the dining car steward to pick up the intercom but received no response. Finally he started walking to the diner but was delayed by passengers' questions so I got there first.

The Heritage diner was nearly full but there was one empty table near the kitchen. The female steward and a waitress were in the middle of an argument by the kitchen; after standing next to them for about a minute I apologized for having to interrupt their discussion but asked to be seated. I also mentioned the lack of an announcement in my car. Smiling, the steward seated me and said that the announcement had been made but our attendant must not have turned the system on. She really got nasty when he arrived but he correctly declined to argue the point in front of customers and sought out the Train Chief. While this was going on an elderly lady entered the car and just seated herself opposite me—the steward started to "chew her out" but soon realized the woman was hard of hearing so it would have done no good. At least the steward and waitress agreed on one thing—passengers cannot seat themselves! A few minutes later two ladies from Tasmania, traveling from San Francisco to Buffalo, joined us and the table was complete.

I had catfish with rice which was quite good. After all the delicious meals on Superliner diners I was surprised at the lack of baked potatoes ["we haven't had them in two years"]. My three tablemates were served long before me. While they were being served I was offered catfish with mashed potatoes which was for someone at another table. Several persons at the table behind us also were brought the wrong items. After what seemed to be an eternity my meal came—the waitress said she "forgot to order it".

Finally finishing dinner at 10:15 PM I thought I'd have a drink in the lounge car before turning in. No way—the lounge car was full of smoke. On this train smoking is permitted during certain hours and had been announced to start at 11 PM. It seems the smokers got started an hour early, thereby making the car uninhabitable. So the drink was carried back to my room, effectively ending any opportunity for further conversation with my fellow passengers.

For the next hour or so I enjoyed the luxury of my roomette complete with a little toilet noise which soon will be a thing of the past on Amtrak. Since I was in the second car, I was lulled to sleep by the engine's whistle as well as the motion. Sleep came about midnight and I recall nothing until about 8:30 the next morning, October 8th. I briefly considered getting up but then thought of Amtrak's advertising slogan, "Do what you wanna do". What I wanted to do was to relax in the luxury of my roomette with the engine whistling up ahead. So that's just what I did for another hour, finally rising at 9:43 as we entered Syracuse.

Breakfast was in the lounge car which seemed smoke-free. Upon finishing I walked to the diner to inquire about lunch since I was in the Boston section and would have to eat before Albany. Based on last night's exper-

(continued on page 23)

The New *Silver Palm* Rolls

By Jack M. Turner

The night's slumber is about to end and soon I will leisurely eat breakfast, check out of my hotel in Williamsburg VA, and make the one-hour drive to Richmond where my family and I will take a quick driving tour of the city. Three hundred miles to the north, Amtrak's newest train, the *Silver Palm*, begins its journey from New York to Miami.

The *Silver Palm* began service on Nov 10, 1996 and is now a few days into its second month of operation. The new schedule of this train is touted by Amtrak as offering same-day service between the Northeast and the eastern Carolinas plus overnight travel between the Carolinas and Florida. Additionally, the *Palm* restores direct train service between Tampa and Miami which ran for a short time in the mid-1980s. Coincidentally, that train was the original *Silver Palm*.

As we dine in a Richmond restaurant, our train should be about to depart Washington; however, a series of delays has put the train behind schedule by about an hour and a half. Nevertheless, the busy Amtrak station in Richmond is a pleasant place to wait with waves of activity as passengers arrive for various trains scheduled out in the late afternoon, an ideal way for a people-watcher to idle away time. The CSX main line linking north and south hums with activity today as several freights glide by. One of these is the Tropicana orange juice train, simply known as *the juice train* to railroaders. Its brightly painted orange boxcars draw the attention of even casual onlookers as it accelerates from a lengthy stop adjacent to the station.

Word has it that the southbound *Silver Palm* should arrive any minute; however, the first Amtrak arrival is the northbound *Carolinian* coming in from Charlotte. A huge Friday crowd boards and soon the horn of another F40 resonates off the walls of a warehouse across the tracks. Expecting the southbound *Palm*, we are surprised when its northbound counterpart eases to a stop a couple car lengths behind the *Carolinian*. Within minutes, our train makes its appearance and we find our way to Viewliner sleeper 62032 *River View* while marveling at the sight of three long distance passenger trains in the station at once.

Our deluxe bedroom is pleasantly appointed in shades of green and we are pleased to find our room's mechanical devices in working order, unlike our first experience with a Viewliner a month earlier. The deluxe bedroom has ample storage space for luggage with a neat shelf behind the head of the upper berth, actually above the hallway, and another large space atop the bathroom annex.

The long sofa easily seats the three of us though we do wish for the movable armchair that is folded up and stowed beneath the couch. Almost imperceptibly the train eases out of the station at 4:27pm and resumes its trek for the warmer climate of Florida. An announcement indicates that the process of handing out dining car reservations has already been completed for those already aboard before Richmond. With thoughts of dining at 10:00pm dancing through my head, I bolt out of the bedroom in search of the prized seating time. Before I get two steps from our room, the porter halts me and displays his apparent ability to read my mind as he asks what time we want to have dinner. As this will be a short night, the early seating is requested and, much to my amazement, secured.

A moment later a very pleasant crew chief stops by the room and introduces himself. He insists that we call upon him if we have any problems. Fortunately, this will be a smooth trip; however, I wish he had been on our Thanksgiving weekend train when we did experience problems.

The homeward bound rush is in full swing on the adjacent highway bridge as we cross the broad James River. The rock-strewn river defines the term *fall line* as the James is navigable only as far as the eastern side of Richmond. On the south bank of the river the railroad darts into a wooded residential area that undoubtedly houses many of the motorists we overtook a few minutes ago.

We heed the first call to dinner and find a beautifully redecorated Heritage dining car. Seat cushions and various appointments wear a soothing light green color and metallic partitions separate the tables at either end of the car from the eight center tables. A vase of fresh carnations welcomes patrons to each table.

The dinner menu, though somewhat limited, includes a sumptuous barbecue sandwich accompanied by cole slaw and corn on the cob that tempts me greatly. However, I opt for an old favorite: oven roasted chicken with salad, mixed vegetables, and dinner rolls. I am happy with my choice as are my wife and son who had selected the barbecue. Dessert consists of blueberry crisp which is very good but I had hoped for the key lime pie offered on the previous week's northbound trip.

One of the drawbacks to winter travel is the early darkness that envelopes the train in a sea of black. I miss the interesting river crossings at Petersburg and at Weldon NC, but find passing Christmas decorations a worthwhile compensation. One of the best is a caboose outlined in festive lights located beside the Weldon depot several feet below our elevated track.

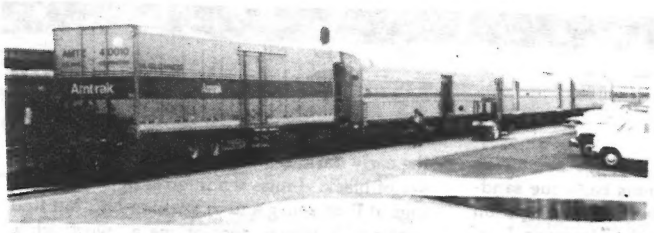
Forty minutes later the *Silver Palm* calls at Rocky Mount's large brick station where a dozen passengers wait to board. This scene will be played out again and again throughout

Introducing the Amtrak

Silver Palm

Before the Nov 10, 1996 startup of the **Silver Palm**, the **Silver Star** (trains 81 & 91) was split into two sections at Jacksonville FL, with one section (#81) going to Miami and the other (#91) going to Tampa. Now, since the **Silver Palm** goes to Tampa and then heads south to Miami, none of Amtrak's three Florida trains—the **Silver Meteor** being the third one—is split anywhere along the route between NY and Miami, which reduces travel time considerably.

In this photo, taken two weeks before the inauguration of **Silver Palm** service, the **Silver Star** is seen at the Jacksonville station shortly after being split into two sections. The train on the right will depart in a few minutes and head west to Tampa, and the train on the left, whose head F40 is receiving a face wash, will leave about 10 minutes afterwards, bound for Miami.—Alex Mayes.



Roadrailer 410010 brings up the rear of southbound SILVER STAR at Richmond VA on Dec 16, 1996. Photos by the author.

the evening as the convenient schedule of this train is more attractive to residents of the Carolinas than the schedules of the *Silver Meteor* and *Silver Star*. Today's *Silver Palm* mimics the schedule of Amtrak's *Palmetto* which debuted in July 1976 and ran until April 1995. Initially the *Palmetto*'s southern terminus was Savannah GA. The train was extended to Jacksonville FL in Jan 1989 to take advantage of lucrative mail contracts. The train was further extended in Oct 1994 to Tampa to provide an added frequency on the popular New York to Florida route. For the first time trains 89 and 90 carried a sleeping car.

Rumors soon surfaced that the train might be extended to Miami while retaining Tampa as a stop; however, Amtrak's budget problems derailed that plan and the *Palmetto* was removed from the Amtrak schedule in April 1995. The states of North and South Carolina loudly protested the loss of daylight service to and from the Northeast and Florida and plans soon were laid to reinstate this service, re-christened the *Silver Palm*. Finally the plan to extend this train to Miami was implemented and the train was outfitted with a regular consist of four Amfleet II coaches, Amfleet II lounge, Heritage diner, and two Viewliner sleepers. A 10-roomette, 6-bedroom sleeper was added to the regular assignment to serve as crew space along with a variety of mail and baggage cars to serve the express and postal haulage needs of the route.

Aside from the new Viewliner cars, the most notable feature of the passing *Silver Palm* is its one or two roadrailers attached to the rear of the train. These new additions to the Amtrak fleet are handled between Philadelphia and Jacksonville where mail is offloaded then reloaded into other waiting roadrailers ready to drive to points in south and central Florida. At first one wonders why this transfer is necessary; however, the answer comes later from a knowledgeable Amtrak supervisor who explains that the Jacksonville depot presently does not have a crane to lift the roadrailer vans off their coupler mate/wheel assemblies. The operation is handled with alacrity as the roadrailers that arrive in Jacksonville on train #89 are reloaded in time to take a new load north two and a half hours later on train #90.

After finishing our leisurely dinner somewhere south of Wilson, we return to our room and turn on the video monitor. A movie is playing but we don' t know what is or when it started. It seems like it would be a good idea if a photocopied sheet listing movie titles and show times were either posted in the sleepers or slipped under the room doors.

Instead, we turn on the audio system and listen to some relaxing jazz which eventually induces sleep. The sofa folds down into a wide lower berth similar to those in Superliner deluxe bedrooms. The upper berth, meanwhile, seems to be wider than its Superliner cousins and definitely has a lot more headroom since there is not a second story above. The top window is a welcome addition for upper berth occupants as it allows the viewing of passing scenery. Surprisingly, the curtains used in the Viewliner cars do not do as good a job of blocking out exterior light as do those in Superliners. The result is distraction from bright lights on station platforms and trackside businesses.

The southbound *Silver Palm* enters South Carolina at about 8:30p.m. and a half hour later I have just drifted off to sleep when the public address system blares with the excited voice of our female conductor who announces: "Our next stop will be Florence in approximately ten minutes." My wife complains that the announcement is really loud as the P.A. speaker is located very close to the top berth. Another announcement follows moments later and I reach for the volume control. I manage to almost mute the next announcement but find that this is only a temporary fix as the "We are arriving in Florence" announcement comes in at the high level again.

When the conductor breathlessly announces "Conductor to the chief; chief pick up the IC [intercom]", I've had enough. I find our attendant in the dining car and complain that we would like to get some sleep and he turns off the car' s intercom. It occurs to me that Amtrak needs some standard guidelines for the use of the intercom as passengers do not want to hear crew to crew messages nor be awakened in the evening. Imagine how annoying it would be to stay in a fine hotel and be awakened by an intercom "Front desk to housekeeping" or some such nonsense.

Throughout the remaining five hours of our trip I drift in and out of sleep, aware of the passage of numerous northbound CSX freights and the northbound *Auto-Train*. There seems to be a heavier volume of traffic than during daylight trips through the region on the northbound run or on the *Silver Meteor*.

We reach Jacksonville about 80 minutes late at 2:45a.m. and the station is a beehive of activity. A baggageman unloads the baggage car two cars behind our sleeper while another crew works the through mail cars while another team gives the train its 1,000-mile inspection. In a few minutes the whole train will pull forward to spot the one roadrailer beside the loading dock where it will be cut off, unloaded and then prepared for pickup by train #90 in an hour.

As we step into the cool North Florida darkness, I wish I could remain snuggled up in our bedroom and awaken to the warmth of Central Florida's citrus groves. That, however, must wait a few weeks.

My chance to ride the *Silver Palm*'s southern 486 milles comes on Jan 24, 1997 as train #89 arrives in Jacksonvillle at 1:59am. Once again the station personnel are very busy unloading the forward material-handling car, which was picked up in Washington, and the baggage and mail cars on the rear. Two of these are material-handling cars pinch-hitting for the roadrailers.

Perhaps because of the early morning hour, I am the day's only boarding passenger. Other southbound riders no doubt have opted for the daylight *Silver Star* and *Silver Meteor*. The solitude allows me to enjoy the lovely new tropical landscaping and new covering leading from the station to the platform. Formerly, this was a bland area with no protection from the elements for persons walking from the waiting room to the covered platform. The new covering is extra tall to accommodate any size equipment that may pass through.

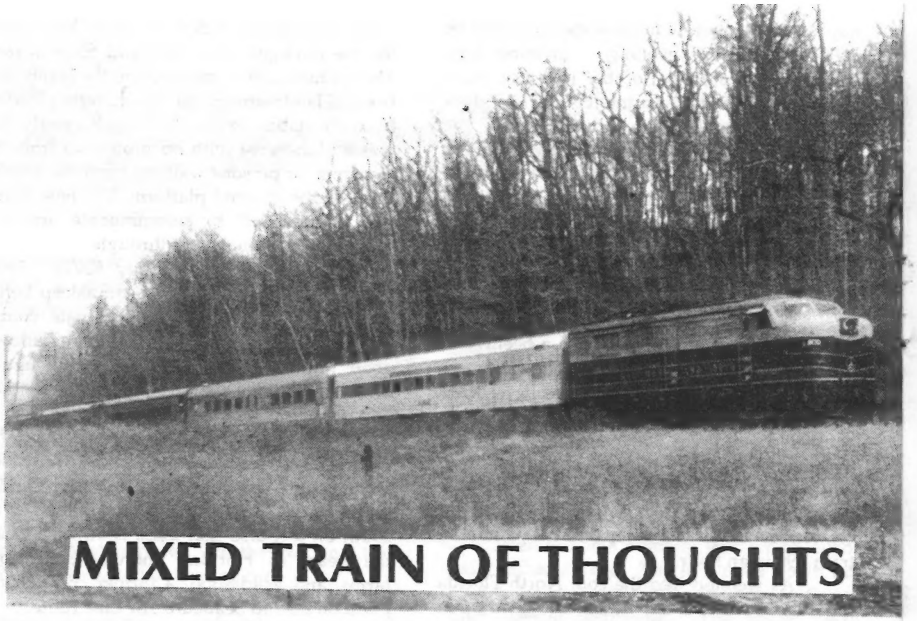
Once aboard Viewliner 62012 *"Harbor View"*, I climb into bed and am asleep before we depart Jacksonville. The climate control and other comforts of Compartment 7 allow a good night's sleep and I am only vaguely aware of a couple station stops during the next six hours.

Upon leaving Jacksonville, the *Silver Palm* takes a westward turn as if toward New Orleans until reaching Baldwin, about 15 miles to the west. There, the train swings to the south on a course that takes it through Ocala, the heart of Florida's thoroughbred horse farms, and Wildwood, a former crew change point on the old Seaboard Air Line route.

At Lakeland, the *Palm* heads west on a peculiar 62-mile side trip that takes it to Tampa and back in just over an hour and a half. The southbound *Silver Palm* is carded to stop in Lakeland at 5:29am to discharge passengers only before heading west to Tampa. The train returns to Lakeland at 7:03am and stops to pick up passengers bound for South Florida. How odd it must seem to casual riders to wake up and see the Lakeland depot out the right-hand side, feel the train move, fall asleep, and awaken 90 minutes later to see the same station now out the left-hand side of the train!

New Viewliner sleeper 62016 "Lake View" on the southbound *Silver Palm* at Miami on Nov 27, 1996, the busy day before Thanksgiving.

(continued on page 21)



MIXED TRAIN OF THOUGHTS

The Chesapeake Division of the Railroad Enthusiasts sponsored a special excursion on the Northern Central Railway between New Freedom and Hyde PA on Feb 1. This trackage was originally the Northern Central line of the Pennsylvania Railroad, which ran from Baltimore MD to Harrisburg PA, and then west to Buffalo NY. Although this was a secondary line, the PRR ran 28 trains a day between Baltimore and Harrisburg on this line as late as 1951. The Penn Central ran a regularly scheduled daily passenger train on this line between Baltimore and Harrisburg until the day Amtrak service started; however, that train consisted of just one E8 locomotive and a coach. In 1972 Hurricane Agnes dealt a devastating blow to this line, washing out the tracks in several places and taking out bridges. The line remained dormant for many years until trackage was restored from the connection with the Stewartstown Railroad at New Freedom north to York PA a few years ago.

Although some freight service resumed, the line has been mainly used for passenger excursions, and more recently, for dinner trains, which have become increasingly popular. The train for the Feb 1 special excursion was comprised of two coaches, two diners and a power generator car. The train was powered by Alco diesels on both ends; an FPA-4 painted in the legendary B&O blue, gray and gold passenger livery (ex-VIA, née CN #6780) on the south end, and RSD-5 #1689 on the opposite end (ex-CNW #1689), painted in the Western Maryland Railway "Speedball" scheme. A total of 67 passengers rode the excursion. Eight photo runbys and three night photo sessions were conducted on the trip.

Shown here is the first photo runby, about two miles south of Railroad PA. (Photo and caption by Alex Mayes.)

"We still haven't heard a satisfactory explanation of why the **Three Rivers** can't be given sleepers, what with all the Heritage stuff available and allowed for use as a dorm (and thus for the public, it would seem)", write Marvin Doudna. "A Thruway bus should meet this train at, say, Willard, south of Sandusky, where it stops regularly (like Garrett IN) for crew/locomotive reasons, to serve Columbus, if not Cincinnati and/or Dayton. Willard has a platform. It is only 66 miles, one hour, from Columbus (a capital, and the largest city with no Amtrak service). The **Three Rivers** should run somehow via Columbus. The Pennsylvanian now leaves Pittsburgh late enough to connect from same-morning Greyhound runs from Columbus."

A thick, soft-cover book from the DOT's Peña was received by Marvin Doudna. He says of it: The book is about the ISTEA renewal and conferences/forums held last year, one of which I and many NARP people were invited to. It included a lavish banquet with dignitaries. A cover letter by Deputy Ass't Sec'y, Gov't Affairs John Horsley was enclosed.

The "book" has a color photo of the Amtrak X2000 at topmost, first position, with only a cargo ship and city bus also pictured on the cover. The same X2000 small photo is repeated throughout for sectional dividers of the book. Rodney Slater is shown as a Federal Hwy Administrator. Other rails shown are apparently the L.A. light rail and commuter train, an Amtrak "Dash" locomotive and train from above, headon; a subway interior, San Francisco cable car lookalike; and containers on a freight train. Altogether, rails are shown nine times out of 58 pages.

Trucks are shown only once as an individual carrier featured in a photo, and a jet likewise once. Shipping is shown eight times, bikes three, city buses four, and highway scenes only nine times (considering that 85% travel by road).

Both Downs and Greyhound's president Lentzsch are shown. Other notables are deputy DOT Sec'y Downey (and, to his credit, Peña only twice); also Atlanta Mayor, two FRA people (Molinari and Deputy Itzkoff); a maritime admiral; a handicapped van; a NY/NJ Port Authority official; two San Diego people; Sen. Lautenberg; Congressman Oberstar; Sen Mark Hatfield.

A baker's dozen of forums were held, chaired by Peña, Downey or Slater, in Philadelphia, Chicago, NY, Vienna VA, San Diego, Portland, New Orleans, Huntington WV, Missoula, Minneapolis, Providence, St Louis and Miami May 13-Sep 25. Boxed under both Downs' and Greyhound president's photos were their statement that trains/buses should have use of ISTEA funds, but nothing was said about this elsewhere in the book. But when I personally cornered Horsley at Miami, telling him states should be able to use ISTEA for Amtrak, he said "This administration supports that view." Let's hope so. All concerned should write John C. Horsley, Dep. Ass't Sec'y Gov't Affairs, US DOT, 400 Seventh St SW, Washington DC 20590, reminding him of this "pledge", as ISTEA is coming up in Congress.

Remember that Amtrak's 1% share of intercity travel is considered statistically zero significance, as is its express good share, also about 1%. Do any readers figure why Amtrak's share has remained a stubborn 1% (Greyhound is 2%). Maybe it's due to having so few routes and capacity, and auto use dies hard.

--Marvin Doudna.

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Grand Canyon Railway has added a Budd-built dome coach to its Williams AZ to Grand Canyon trains. The car has been named "Coconino" after a small canyon the train traverses. Passengers wishing dome seating should reserve "Coconino Dome" class, while lower-level seating has been designated "Coconino Main". Other classes of service are "Chief" class in the first class "Chief Keokuck" car, "Club" class and "Coach" class. Contact Grand Canyon Rail ay at (800) 843-8724 for reservations. —Jack Turner.

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Texas Eagle support: The Arkansas Amtrak Coalition last month sent a letter, excerpted below, to Arkansas Congressmen, Am' officials and DOT Secretary Rodney Sla

...We are asking you to re-engage your commitment to Amtrak's Texas Eagle. Cities along the Texas Eagle route are launching a comprehensive marketing plan, working jointly to increase ridership. Amtrak pathfinder signs will be installed to increase public awareness... The new Arkansas state maps are including Amtrak in its legend and the Arkansas Dept of parks and tourism is willing to promote Amtrak in its brochures. More equitable distribution of cars, and expanding the Texas Eagle to daily service would give Amtrak significantly increased ridership.

Individual states should not have to compete against each other to be served. Passenger rail service is needed nationwide and should not be eliminated incrementally. If any tax dollars are dedicated to Amtrak for passenger rail service, then a mandate should accompany that funding requiring that service continue where it presently exists. Passenger rail service to Texas and Arkansas is critical at a time when tourism is increasing. Texas has replaced Florida as the number two state in the union for tourism, and Arkansas, home of President Clinton, has an increasing number of visitors as well. Arkansas, the Natural State, has some of the most beautiful scenery in the nation that Texas Eagle passengers can enjoy. Communities in Arkansas have spent several thousands of dollars to beautifully restore depots, and Amtrak needs to capitalize on this community-based investment.

Although poor planning, marketing and promotional efforts have created financial problems for Amtrak, we stand ready to assist on the local level, in both Arkansas and Texas. Congress should require Amtrak to be more accountable for its performance and the breadth of its service. We join our friends in the Texas Eagle Coalition in saying, "It must be done. It can be done. And now is the time."

(The Coalition consists of the Mayors of Little Rock, Malvern, Arkadelphia and Walnut Ridge, the City Manager of Texarkana, Arkansas Governor's rep, and Arkansas ARP's Bill Pollard.)

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Sources tell RTN that BNSF CEO Robert Krebs spent a day or two recently at the Pasco WA hump yard seeking the cause of delays at the often-congested facility. This has fueled rumors that BNSF may be considering a plan to reopen the long-closed Gavin hump yard west of Minot ND to help reduce congestion at

Pasco, and also possibly Northtown near Minneapolis, and perhaps even at Galesburg IL. Increases in boxcar traffic plus removal of the Cicero IL (near Chicago) hump have kept other yards busy.

The Clinton Administration is, in effect, de-funding Amtrak for 1998 (the fiscal year that starts next Oct 1), reported NARP, who explained the process as follows:

"We have learned that the President's proposal for ISTEA reauthorization will not include Amtrak authorization language. More importantly, it will not include any funding mechanisms for Amtrak. That's a big problem because the President's 1998 budget proposal (released Feb 6) assumed that all Amtrak funding, operating and capital, would come from the Highway Trust Fund. But to make that happen legally, the President also has to propose changes to ISTEA to that effect, because ISTEA is the law that governs what is done with the Highway Trust Fund. In effect, the President is proposing to de-fund Amtrak for 1998."

NARP also said earlier in Feb that "the Clinton Administration needs to hear strong reactions to three bad decisions on Amtrak: 1, the budget funding levels are too low; 2, the budget has all Amtrak funding coming from the Highway Trust Fund; even though that sounds good, in budgetary terms it means that Amtrak really isn't funded at all, just like two years ago; 3, it appears the Administration has decided not to include an Amtrak reauthorization in the Administration's ISTEA bill. Tell your Democratic Senators that they should tell the President he's going the wrong way on Amtrak."

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NARP issued the following press release on Feb 6, entitled "Amtrak would collapse under Clinton budget":

When it comes to Amtrak, the nation's intercity rail passenger network, the Clinton Administration is all talk and no action, said Ross B. Capon, Executive Director of NARP. Administration officials often say Amtrak's operating grants should end by 2002. But President Clinton's 1998 budget lacks the most crucial tool Amtrak must have to attain operational self-sufficiency—a dedicated source of capital funding.

Congress now must set things right, Capon added. Recognizing the high costs Amtrak's demise would impose on the nation interms of more spending on transportation alternatives, Congress must create dedicated capital funding for Amtrak (such as from one half-cent of the existing federal gasoline tax), provide enough resources for Amtrak to survive fiscal 1998, enact legislative reforms aimed at Amtrak efficiency and allow states to invest some of their federal transportation funds on intercity passenger rail as part of ISTEA renewal. For passenger rail to survive, Congress must provide the leadership that the Administration has not.

President Clinton's Fiscal 1998 budget includes $767 million for Amtrak, $75 million (9%) below current funding and apparently much further below the request Amtrak plans to submit next week. The President's budget fails in two important respects: 1) Capital Investment: Whereas the half cent would provide $750 million, the Administration request is for $423 million–$200 million each for the NE Corridor and the nationwide system, plus $23 million for continuing the NYC station project.

The $200 million proposed for the NE Corridor is far below what is needed to start high-speed service on schedule in 1999. The failure to do that would have nationwide implications. FRA Administrator Jolene Molitoris said at the National Press Club Jan 22 that the planned NE high-speed service "is the economic engine" that will make a profit and help save Amtrak. At the Clinton level, however, electrification to Boston would not be complete and the "economic engine" would not exist.

More generally, a stingy capital budget lets Amtrak do very little to improve its economic performance, since so much is needed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Food and Drug Administration regulations, and environmental mandates and paying principal on the loans used to acquire much of the new rolling stock Amtrak now operates.

Operations: Amtrak's operating loss for Oct-Dec was 13% below (better than) the two-years' earlier quarter, thanks to retiring older equipment, a corporate restructuring that reduced the payroll by 2000 people, aggressive fares increases (sometimes too aggressive), and increased funding from states.

However, because Amtrak's system already is so skeletal, the Administration's proposed $202 million—a 9% reduction, even though Amtrak is expected to request an increase—leaves Amtrak two choices, both likely fatal:

1) Lop off even more of the system, so that in fiscal 1997 and 1998 together, all service will have ended to Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Missis-sippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky and Wyom-ing. This would strand thousands of passengers—and cause a political backlash that would doom any consensus for federal funding for the remain-ing system—even the corridors and high-speed programs so valued by the Administration.

2) Run the system intact until all funding runs out, provoking a crisis. Neither option serves the public interest. NARP urges President Clinton to work with the Congress toward a reasonable solution that preserves all existing routes.

NARP is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to educating the public about the benefits of rail travel. It was founded in 1967 and has 12,000 individual members.

Now that the President has acted, our focus shifts to the Congress, NARP said. Rail advocates should tell their Members of Congress that the President's funding levels for Amtrak are bad, and that Congress needs to do better in terms of 1998 funding and the half-cent gas tax issue, NARP said.

In Congress, the first Amtrak hearing was to be Feb 25, in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. However, that hearing apparently has been postponed. NARP reported that the hearing will focus on a General Accounting Office report that will outline the very serious financial problems Amtrak is facing, which includes the possible need to borrow almost $100 million before the end of FY 97.

In the House Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee, "public witness" hearings will be held Feb 25-26, including testimony by NARP Executive Director Ross Capon. Then on Mar 20 the FRA and Amtrak will testify. In these hearings, chaired by Frank Wolf (R-VA), Wolf is expected to criticize Amtrak management sharply for its involvement in developing legislation that included the 6-month postponement of the discontinuance of five threatened trains, NARP said.

Amtrak is working on potential mail and express contracts to help save both the **Texas Eagle** and the **Pioneer**, according to many rumors and reports. Amtrak is being secretive about this to avoid jeopardizing negotiations. Said NARP, "Since such efforts are not likely to bear fruit by the May 10 train-off date, several Texas mayors are asking state legislators to approve a 2-year, $5.6 million load to Amtrak, aimed at keeping the Eagle in service between May 10 and the time when significant mail and express business is developed. Texas rail passenger supporters should urge their state legislators to work for this legislation".

Correspondent Gene Poon, traveling into Chicago in mid-Feb was told (rumors?) by crewmen that Amtrak is signing a mail contract for seven material-handling cars or the equivalent, to run Seattle-Chicago on the UP and old C&NW route, bypassing Denver.

Rodney Slater was unanimously confirmed by the Senate Feb 6 to become DOT Secretary, and he was sworn in at a White House ceremony Feb 14.

Threatened American Airlines strike was the big transportation news in Feb, but it was forestalled at the last minute Feb 14 by Presidential action. Anticipating it, Amtrak issued press releases describing virtually all Amtrak routes and offering to honor at face value American tickets if they were presented to an Amtrak station ticket agent.

The Administration's budget proposal for Amtrak was $202 million for operations (while Amtrak wants about $245 million); for system capital, $200 million, down from $223 million this year; for the NE Corridor, $200 million, down from $255 million; and $23 million for the NYC Farley building project. The budget for transit was unchanged, and highways and aviation were cut about 2% (compared to a total 9% Amtrak cut). Total federal spending is up 3%.

League of American Bicyclists is angry at Amtrak and is launching a postcard campaign because apparently Amtrak told the group that Superliner baggage-coaches would get roll-on bicycle access, but instead Amtrak is converting the space to smoking lounges.

The Amtrak Crescent, train 19, was in a grade crossing accident Feb 11 about 1.5 miles south of the Hattiesburg MS station. As the engineer told the dispatcher, "The pickup truck just followed the car ahead of him over the crossing." The pickup truck driver was a fatality. The train was reportedly traveling at 50-55mph, and it was held for 85mins. Coincidenntally, the train had lost 85mins at Laurel when the NS dispatching computer malfunctioned. The train got to New Orleans 3hrs late.

Continuation of the Gulf Coast Limited between Mobile and New Orleans past its Mar 30 cutoff is in doubt. Apparently only one casino on the Gulf Coast has made any effort to provide passengers for the train. Casino Magic meets the train schedule at Bay St. Louis with a mini-van—sometimes. The casinos didn't want to be bothered with another type of transportation, apparently. But on a positive note, an Indian casino near Meridian MS has bought out an entire coach on the Crescent on 17 separate days—a coach which essentially deadheaded from Atlanta to New Orleans, the ATL-NYP coach, since no revenue cars are switched in Atlanta. —Adron Hall.

RAIL FANTRIPS

EXCURSION OF THE MONTH

Jun 22-Jul 3: Private Car Rail Trip to the 1997 NRHS Convention. Wash DC-Salt Lake City by car "Dover Harbor". Lv Wash DC Jun 22 traveling west thru spectacular mountain scenery via the Cardinal & the route of the Calif. Zephyr, arriving in Salt Lake City Jun 24, before start of convention. After convention, on Jun 30, Dover Harbor will return eastward, again over the route of the Calif. Zephyr to Chicago, then via Capitol Ltd to arrive in Wash DC on Jul 3.

All psgrs enjoy the comfortable lounge of the Dover Harbor; sleeping accommodations are in the car's classic Pullman double bedrooms. All meals, snacks, beverages, wines and spirits are included while en route. Round trip fare is $1799/person ($1949 after Feb 15). A one-way parlor seat fare of $269 is also available between Denver & Salt Lake for the daylight trip thru the Rockies. Write the Washington Chapter of NRHS, c/o Henry Bielstein, Ticket Agent, 13425 Reid Circle, Ft. Washington MD 20744-6522. Telephone 301-292-9592 or E-mail to dcnrhs@us.net.

May 2-13: Canadian Rockies By Rail. From Windsor ON to Toronto, on Canadian; 2 nites Jasper; Skeena to Prince George, overnite; BC Rail there to N. Vancouver; 3 nites Vancouver. Rocky Mountaineer, overnite Kamloops & Banff. Fly Calgary-Detroit. $2995 up. Bluewater MI NRHS, Box 296, Royal Oak MI 48068, 810-399-7963

May 4: Rail-A-Rama train show, Demetri's Convention Ctr, Route 1, Foxboro MA, 10am-4pm. $3. Model RRs, hobby & craft tables, movies, snack bar. Mystic Valley Railway Society Inc, Box 486, Hyde Park MA 02136. Phone 617-361-4445 24hrs. Handicapped accessible.

Send large SASE to addresses. One listing in RTN is free. It must give specific dates of operation. Excursion of the Month appears once a month, in alternate issues. Write: Rail Travel News, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

CARS & CONSISTS

The Superbowl in the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans Jan 26 brought numerous office and private cars, plus a few extra Amtrak cars, to New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal (NOUPT). In fact, it was so crowded that Union Pacific, after offloading at NOUPT, took its train back across the Mississippi River to its own yard. The following lists the cars parked on tracks 2-10 in NOUPT the evening of Jan 25:

Track 2: Bumper post: 800038 NYC Bonnie Brook; 92 Scottish Thistle; 800275 Sierra Hotel; SCL 3222 Palm Beach; 800062 Silver Chalet; 800654 Silver Express; 800072 Silver Lodge; Amtrak 32027 (crew dorm space—Amtrak hotel space for crews was cancelled during Mardi Gras, so Superliner sleepers housed crews).

Track 3: Bumper post: Amtrak 34052 coach, Amtrak 35011 coach, Amtrak loco 369 (this was train 24, leaving at 5:30pm).

Track 4: Bumper post: Amtrak 32100 "New York" (crew dorm space).

Track 5: Bumper post: UP 9003; 800588 Northern sky, 800587 City of Milwaukee, Amtrak cars 32075 "Connecticut", 32005, 38049, 33047, 34044, 31005, 34073, 34079, 39003, 1260 (#59's equipment).

Track 6: Bumper post: Tennessee; Amtrak cars 62010 Forest View, 62047 Village View, 62043 Sunset View, 8559, 28018, 25093, 25083, 25099, 25038, 1249, 1464, engines 28 (P42) and 340 (F40) (#19's train, arrived at 9pm).

Track 7: Bumper post: 800075 BN 24 Glacier View; 800635 ATSF 62 diner; 800139 BN 26 Lake Superior; 800271 BN 6 Missouri River; 800294 BN 1 Mississippi River; 800185 BN 3 Red River; 800567 ATSF 53 John S. Reed; 800264 BN 23 Stampede Pass.

Track 8: Bumper post: 800637 ATSF 50 Santa Fe; 800291 BN 2 Columbia River; 800232 ATSF 52 Atchison; 800648 ATSF 53 Topeka; 800661 ATSF 64 Regal Hunt; 800663 ATSF 66 Regal Lark; 800381 BN 28 Snoqualmie Pass.

Track 9: Bumper post: KCS 99 New Orleans; KCS 56 Jackson; KCS 98 Kansas City; KCS 1887 Arthur E. Stillwell; engines KCS 4 Vicksburg & KCS 1 Meridian (F units).

Track 10: Bumper post: 800064 Dagny Taggart; 800413 IC 1; 800653 IC 2; 800148 Wisconsin & Southern (W&SO) Northern View; 800-149 W&SO Northern Lites; 800150 W&SO Northern Plains.

UP's train occupied track 6 from 4:30pm to 6:15pm, but was moved to UP yard to open a track for Amtrak's arriving **Crescent**. UP train's consist: **Track 6:** Bumper post: UP 102 St. Louis; UP 302 Overland; UP 6005 Walter Dean; UP 1605 Powder River; UP 201 Wyoming; UP 1610 Portola; UP 202 Cabarton; UP 208 power car; engines UP 951, UP 963 & UP 949 (E units). —Adron Hall.

Consists from the **Silver Palm** article:

***Silver Palm**, train 89, Richmond VA Dec 16, 1996: engines 397 & 300 (F40s); cars 1419, 25040, 25106, 25006, 25116, 28008, 8558, 62043 "Sunset View", 62032 "River View", 2460 "Pine Island" (10-6 crew sleeper), 1191 working baggage, 1726 mail, (Philadelphia to Jacksonville:) 5004 coupler mate/410010 roadrailer van/5005 coupler mate. Same, Miami Jan 24, 1997: engines 395 (F40) & 23 (P42); 1541, 25086, 25073, 25030, 25104, 28021, 8550, 62012 "Harbor View", 62009 "Evening View", 2438 crew sleeper, 1133 working baggage, 1717 mail (Philadelphia to Jacksonville:) 1437 & 1542.

THE OPEN VESTIBULE

I monitored two very disturbing transmissions on my September Amtrak trip. A Conrail dispatcher outside Chicago told the engineer on the **Cardinal** very bitterly to "Hurry up and get *that* train off my railroad." An engineer on a waiting CSX freight in Virginia sarcastically said "Here comes that *government* train."

In all my years of monitoring the railroads I have never heard such a transmission. If my history services me correctly, most railroads in the US were built with either public money or public lands, if not both. Conrail would not even exist today if Congress had not saved the several bankrupt railroads with public money.

Maybe it is about time some of this generosity is repaid.

Graham H. Overton
Lawrenceville, Georgia.

RTN 551 Rail Fantrips "Excursion of the Month" outlined a Canadian trip which renewed my pleasure of a Canadian trip earlier this year. It was a rail fantrip taken through "Mountain Outin' Tours, Inc." of East Irvine CA.

The trip: On British Columbia Rail, using two Budd cars principally; north from Vancouver to Prince George (used as center of travel); west to Smithers, Kitimat (site of Alcan Aluminum smelter), Prince Rupert; east along the Skeena River to Kitwanga (native village, totem poles, etc.), Smithers, Prince George; west and north to Ft. St. James and rail on Takla Line to Takla Lake and Lovell, return to Prince George; north to 50 KVA line to Tumbler Ridge (coal mine), motor to Dawson Creek; south to Prince George, to North Vancouver. Nights are spent in hotels, with connecting bus awaiting at the railroad depots. All in all, a great trip!

It was a well-organized tour, well-conducted, as have been other tours arranged by the same agency. The "independence" of Budd cars made the use of some freight-only lines possible—great for mileage collectors.

Robert H. Clark
South San Francisco, California.

I enjoyed your emotionally-charged response to Greg Thompson's letter [in RTN 562]. A couple of points deserve expansion.

A lot of the passenger service in the 1960s was retained, by law, well beyond its contribution to the railroad's profitability. Remember: railroads were not allowed to discontinue services on their own. They had to go through a formal hearing process. This requirement existed due to the fact that then, as now, quality rail passenger service enjoyed popular support.

That is why it is important to realize that popular support is Amtrak's greatest strength. But this strength is not recognized by Amtrak management, as shown by Amtrak management's decision-making process over the past two years or so. Sooner or later, probably shortly after May 10, the disregard for this support will come back to haunt Amtrak management, and Amtrak management will find that the now-fashionable backing of their efforts to secure the longed-for half-cent of gas tax will have evaporated...

I do think that long-distance trains should operate at speeds better than the average of about 45mph, to remain competitive with automobile travel.

Name withheld
Sacramento, California.

THE *SILVER PALM* (continued from page 15)

On this trip I don't even see Lakeland once, though I do briefly notice our having stopped in Tampa. I am surprised that I slept through our 5-mile backup move into the Tampa stub-end station, but am glad this is better than my sleepless Thanksgiving trip.

We depart Sebring at 8:40am and are on time, having made up 33 minutes since Jacksonville. As I peak out my window, I am greeted by the sight of orange trees loaded with delicious-looking fruit. The outdoor temperature is 80. I heed the last call for breakfast and find the food satisfactory, though the portions are less than generous. Diner 8550 wears the same refurbished interior as the dining car on my family's December trip and I find this more appealing than the old decor.

The route south of Sebring traverses a lot of scrub and sawgrass territory and is familiar to me, so I amuse myself by inspecting the Viewliner more closely. I find the compartments have facing blue seats with purple-cushioned headrests and blue carpeting, while the deluxe and handicapped rooms have dark green sofa seats and lighter carpeting. Walls

are made of a gray fiberglass-type material similar to that in Superliner sleepers.

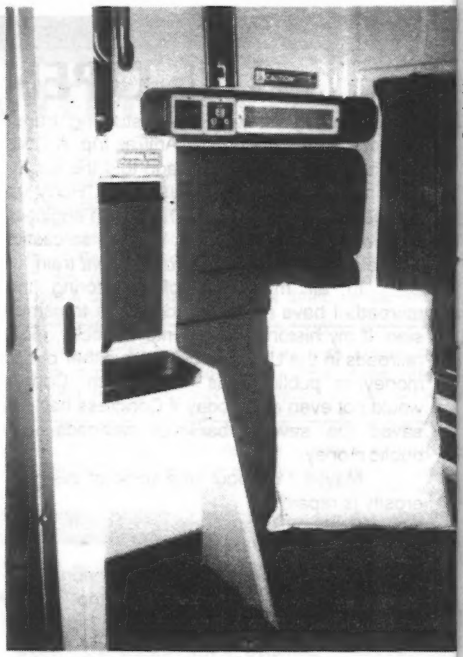
The handicapped bedroom (bedroom H) is at the car's forward end with the room's entrance facing the vestibule. Deluxe bedrooms A and B follow in that order and their doors face the hallway. All three rooms contain upper and lower berths and enclosed toilet facilities that include a shower. Sinks are in the bedroom much the same as in Superliner deluxe rooms.

Viewliner compartments are in the rear two-thirds of the car with the hallway separating even- and odd-numbered rooms. The even-numbered rooms face the train's left side; odd-numbered rooms face the right. These rooms are similar to Superliner economy bedrooms; however, each also contains a toilet and sink. Though the toilet lacks privacy when the room has two occupants, it is accessible without stowing the lower berth. The toilet seat is angled away from the room's side walls to permit comfortable usage, unlike old Slumbercoaches.

To accommodate the toilet, the Viewliners have a slightly narrower hallway than did the old Heritage sleepers. Other improvements are the inclusion of two fans in each room to circulate air conditioning; adjustable temperature controls that work; and air conditioning vents along the window. The upper berth pulls down from near the ceiling on a track that allows for easy deployment and stowage. As the car has but one level, there is ample headroom in the upper bed. At first glance, luggage storage is tight; however, passengers can easily store one large suitcase, a tote bag and duffle bag in the compartment. There are no luggage bins near the vestibule, as there are in Superliner. Beds are tapered at the foot. Beds and toilets face either forward or backward, depending upon which side of the aisle there are on.

The Viewliners contain 12 revenue compartments with rooms 1 and 2 nearest the deluxe bedrooms. In reality, rooms 3-6 are nearest the center of the car. The "B" end of the Viewliner contains a well-designed shower room on one side of the hall and the car attendant's compartment on the opposite side. Two improvements are eveident in the shower room: it doesn't fog up during a hot shower, and it has a plexiglass shower door rather than a shower curtain.

The final leg of my journey finds us waiting for time at West Palm Beach, meeting a tardy northbound *Silver Meteor*, and passing two northbound TriRail commuter trains.



A Viewliner compartment. Photos by the author.

Despite this and a couple of slow orders, we ease into Miami 15 minutes early at 11:30am.

Given time to succeed, the *Silver Palm* should prove popular with South Florida tourists, thanks to its morning arrival southbound and evening northbound departure. Likewise, Carolina customers will find the train's hours more favorable than the *Silver Meteor's*. A new Florida to Charlotte NC market is also being touted by Amtrak via a connection with the *Carolinian* at Rocky Mount.

Less promising, however, is the *Palm's* new intrastate routing between Tampa and Miami. This market failed to prove itself during the short life of the original *Silver Palm* and the current schedule is not conducive to promoting Tampa traffic. Likewise, the train's early southbound departure from New York and pre-midnight northbound arrival may cause prospective riders to select the *Silver Star* or *Silver Meteor*. New Englanders will find excellent connections at Washington by using the *Night Owl*.

For best viewing of this route, I suggest traveling north. The many opposing freight trains and numerous river crossings will make you glad you selected this route.

BOSTON LSL (continued from page 11)

ience, I was not surprised to learn that lunch would not be served until 12:30PM. I reminded the steward that the train would be in the Albany station at that time and couldn't serve, as the power would be off for the switching. Thus the 12:30 in reality would become 1:00 PM and the Boston passengers would be out of luck. Sorry, nothing could be done and I resigned myself to a snack bar lunch.

About 11:30 the Train Chief came up to the Boston sleeper and advised the passengers that they could have lunch by going to the diner about 11:55. The surly looks from the waitresses clearly indicated that the Chief had overruled them and they were not happy about it. Although the Chief had given us menus, when order taking time came we were told: "Forget the menus, here's what we have". I had a hamburger plate and finished about 5 minutes after the Albany arrival. Four Boston passengers at the table across the aisle never got served and eventually left in disgust.

After the station stop at Albany the front of the train [engines, baggage, 10-6 sleeper, 3 Amfleet II coaches and Amfleet II lounge] pulled forward on to the Boston line. A long platform has been built so the train can wait there while the other cars are being switched; those who come out of the station to reboard have a long walk, "half way to Boston" as one rider put it. Meanwhile the New York section was switched on to a waiting 700 series AMD with an Amcafe and Amfleet coach. Finally, the Boston mail cars which had been on the rear of #48, were placed on the rear of #448 and we were ready to go.

Train 48 whistled off at 1 PM (due out at 1250) and we departed 6 minutes late at 1:16. The ride on the connecting trackage rebuilt by Amtrak went fast and we soon entered Conrail's Boston Line from Selkirk at Post Road Crossing. An eastbound freight was waiting to follow us out and much track and signal work was underway in the area.

The ride through the Berkshires is quite scenic. The B&A has been single-tracked since my last trip and we passed quite a few freights enroute. One CR freight was on hand at North Adams Jct., just East of Pittsfield and two more passed shortly thereafter. While the train was moving through the Berkshires, I began to seriously consider my options for the final leg home. The plan was to stay on #448 into Boston, where I would have 14 minutes to catch #179. If necessary I could gain a few more minutes by dropping off at Back Bay. Although we were running only 5 minutes late, a meet with even one CR freight could change that to a point where the connection would be jeopardized.

Thus I opted to detrain in Springfield where I would have about 2 1/2 hours to explore and would get home about 2 hours earlier. Besides, it had been about 10 years since my last trip on the Springfield Line.

Springfield arrival came at 3:34 (due at 3:29) where I was greeted by dark and drizzly weather. Since my last visit Amtrak has built a new station at track level with stair and elevator access to the street. The underpass no longer is used and passengers use a walkway over the tracks to reach the trains. While I was there, several Conrail freights passed. The first action was a southbound B&M (Guilford) heralded by a radio transmission: "We need to cross the diamond, back into the station and proceed to the yard." The two Guilford-scheme units [one MeC and one ST] and 27 cars provided some interesting photo ops in the station.

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NE Direct #477-177: The final leg

Train 477 consisted of F40 #217 and three coaches, of which one was open at Springfield. Shortly before departure #449 arrived on a parallel track and was still in the station when we departed on time at 6 PM. It had the same basic consist as did its eastbound counterpart. The Trainman was confused with my ticket although I explained that a Boston-NY ticket should be good from Springfield as it would have been good BOS-NYP via Springfield. After consulting with the conductor he accepted it and then inquired about my trip. He was glad to hear that I had enjoyed nearly all of it.

Some stops on this line are only a few minutes apart which really seemed strange in view of the long distances--sometimes several hours--between stations on some of the trains I had ridden. After a brief stop at New Haven we pulled down and then backed on to become part of #177 from Boston. After the New Haven departure I headed to the snack bar for dinner while traversing the familiar Metro-North line. All too soon came Stamford and then my destination of New Rochelle one minute late at 8:57 PM.

So here I was, 8791 miles and 12 days later, back on the same platform from which I had started out for Washington on September 25th. My daughter was on hand to meet me. The trip was relaxing, fun and just about everything I could have wanted. And, I really felt "stuffed" like someone getting off a cruise ship, after traveling first class across the country for the past four days!

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Photos by Bill Hakkarinen. See East Coast Report, page 3.

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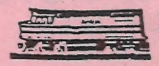
With your 3-year new, renewal or gift subscription to Rail Travel News, you can have a free copy of RTN's "home video", "Rails of California, Vol. One".

This video has some flaws, but it's the only film we'll ever have of the SIERRA 49ER EXPRESS, shot in 1991 a few weeks before this unusual train's discontinuance.

When we receive your remittance of only $69 for 72 issues (a bargain in itself!), plus $3 for shipping costs, we will mail you this unusual video production.

The video is available in VHS size only. It is 33 minutes in duration, in color and natural sound. An especially interesting feature of the film is a variety of wonderful train horns, including Amtrak, Southern Pacific, Santa Fe, SIERRA 49ER EXPRESS, and SP maintenance of way equipment. On the 49ER you'll see the company's own domes and rebuilt bi-level commuter cars as well as leased AMERICAN-EUROPEAN EXPRESS cars.

Don't delay—write now!



Contents of video:

- SIERRA 49ER EXPRESS
- CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR
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- ☐ Continue sending me RTN for ___year(s) at $26 per year, 2years $49 or 3 years $72.
- ☐ I am eligible for the retired senior (62 yrs) rate of $24 per year (initial: _____).
- ☐ Also send me Train Rider Magazine for only $13 for 12 issues.
  - ☐ My remittance is enclosed.
  - ☐ Please bill me (plus $2 billing fee).

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

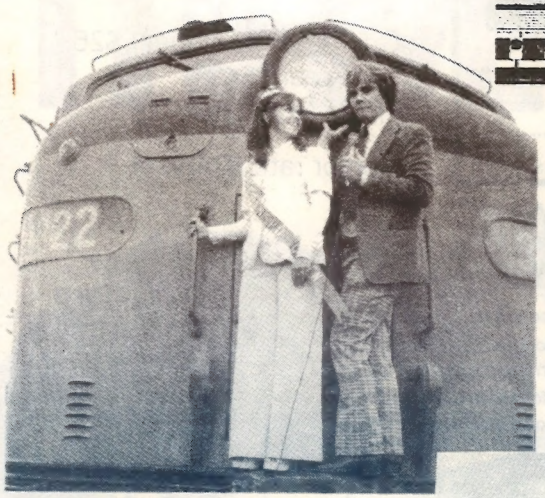
IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION IF A "TIME TO RENEW" MESSAGE APPEARS ON YOUR LABEL.

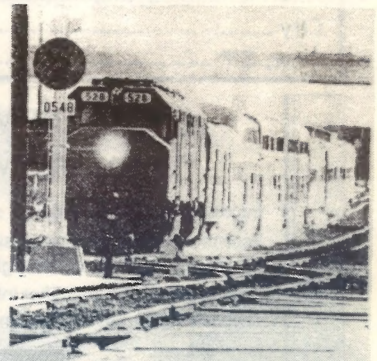
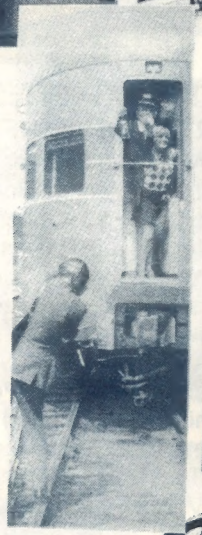
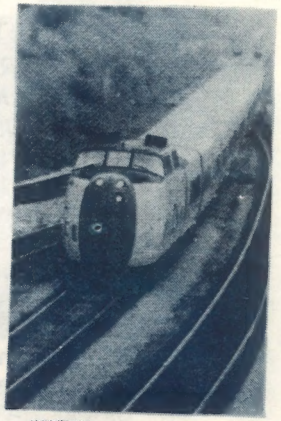
PLEASE MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO MESSAGE MEDIA.

FOR FASTER SERVICE PLEASE INCLUDE A COPY OF YOUR LABEL.

(R) 3-22-97 #564

HERE'S YOUR





NEW ISSUE OF RAIL TRAVEL NEWS